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(12) PETTY PATENT	(11) Application No. AU 199889435 B3
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE	(10) Patent No. 703239

(54)	Title	
	Frozen dessert dispensing system	
(51) ⁶	International Patent Classification(s)	
	A23G 009/28	A23P 001/12
(21)	Application No: 199889435	(22) Application Date: 1998.10.22
(43)	Publication Date :	1999.03.18
(43)	Publication Journal Date :	1999.03.18
(45)	Granted Journal Date :	1999.03.18
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(56)	Related Art	
	WO 89/0506	
	AU 57058/94	
	AU 29298/89	



AU9889435

(12) PATENT ABRIDGMENT (11) Document No. AU-B-89435/98
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE (10) Acceptance No. 703239

(Australlian Petty Patent)

- (54) Title
FROZEN DESSERT DISPENSING SYSTEM
- (51)⁶ International Patent Classification(s)
A23G 009/28 A23P 001/12
- (21) Application No. : 89435/98 (22) Application Date : 22.10.98
- (43) Publication Date : 18.03.99
- (45) Publication Date of Granted Application : 18.03.99
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- (56) Prior Art Documents
WO 89/0506
AU 57058/94
AU 29298/89

(57) Claim

1. A dispensing system for frozen desserts, said dispensing system including a plurality of containers and a dispensing device, each container containing an individual portion of frozen dessert, said container including a substantially cylindrical tube having first and second ends, a nozzle means toward said first end, a piston means located between said nozzle means and said second end, said piston means being adapted for sliding movement along the tube, said individual portion of frozen dessert being contained within the cylindrical tube between said nozzle means and said piston means, said dispensing device including a plunger means mounted for reciprocating movement, a drive means for driving said plunger, a support means for supporting said first end of said container with said plunger in engagement with said piston means, the arrangement being such that with said container located on said support means, the individual portion of frozen dessert may be dispensed through said nozzle means by actuating said drive means to force the piston and plunger along the tube.

AUSTRALIA

Patents Act 1990

ANDREW MICHAEL WELLS

ORIGINAL

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
PETTY PATENT

Invention Title:

Frozen dessert dispensing system

The following statement is a full description of this invention including the best method of performing it known to me:-

FROZEN DESSERT DISPENSING SYSTEM

The present invention relates to a dispensing system for frozen desserts. In particular, but not exclusively, the invention relates to a dispensing system for ice-cream, frozen yoghurt and sorbets, including a plurality of containers, each containing an individual portion of the frozen dessert and a dispenser for dispensing the dessert from the container into for example a serving dish or wafer cornet. In particular but not exclusively the invention relates to an ice-cream dispensing system for use by ice-cream sellers, and in restaurants and fast food outlets.

Commercially, individual portions of ice-cream may be dispensed using a soft-serve machine, in which the ice-cream is mixed and frozen in bulk. Alternatively ice-cream may be dispensed using a dispensing machine from a bulk container pre-filled with ice-cream before being placed within the machine, for example the dispensing system described in WO 94/14333. These dispensing systems have disadvantages for both retailer and customer. There is no control of the size of the individual portions dispensed, and if not all the ice-cream is sold within a certain time period, there is the possibility of deterioration of the bulk product. The dispensing machines are expensive and bulky, and normally limit customers to just one flavour.

Individual portions of ice-cream also may be dispensed from large tubs using scoops. Although customers have a choice of flavours, this method of dispensing ice-cream is slow and time consuming. Again there is no control of the size of the individual portions dispensed, with the possibility of deterioration of the bulk product, if not all the ice-cream is sold within a certain time period. This method of dispensing ice-cream can also be less hygienic than machine dispensing.

Individual ice-creams may also be sold in pre-packaged portions. This alleviates the problem of portion control, however it cannot be readily used in certain commercial outlets, for example restaurants, since the portion can generally not be presented attractively.

A means and a method for dispensing individual portions of ice-cream is described in WO 94/13154. Ice-cream is supplied in containers, each of which contains an individual

portion of the ice-cream. The containers are filled through an open end which is then sealed with a closure member. The containers are preferably hemispherical in shape or alternatively may be of a truncated cone shape with the side walls tapering inwards towards a circular base. When required, a container is placed in a discharge unit, including
 5 a plunger of corresponding shape. The plunger is activated, deforming either the container or the closing member and the product is discharged through an outlet either in the closure member or in the container.

There are however, a number of disadvantages with this dispensing system. The dispensing mechanism is complicated and expensive. The system is not suitable for
 10 manual operation due to the large force, in the region of 30-40psi, which is required to dispense the ice-cream from the container. The container is shaped like a tub. This results in customers often assuming that they are purchasing a tub of ice-cream, rather than a ice-cream that needs to be dispensed from the container. The shape of the containers causes stacking of the containers to be difficult and results in a poor use of space. The containers
 15 are also difficult to fill resulting in the presence of air pockets within the ice-cream. Furthermore, the outlet is so small that only ice-cream without particulates can be dispensed. The container is deformed during the discharge process, preventing the container from being reused. The container does not always deform as intended, resulting in unreliable operation. It is also difficult to expel all the ice-cream from the dispenser.



Summary of the Invention

The present invention is a dispensing system for frozen desserts, said
 dispensing system including a plurality of containers and a dispensing
 device, each container containing an individual portion of frozen dessert,
 said container including a substantially cylindrical tube having first and
 5 second ends, a nozzle means toward said first end, a piston means located
 between said nozzle means and said second end, said piston means being
 adapted for sliding movement along the tube, said individual portion of
 frozen dessert being contained within the cylindrical tube between said
 10 nozzle means and said piston means, said dispensing device including a
 plunger means mounted for reciprocating movement, a drive means for
 driving said plunger, a support means for supporting said first end of said
 container with said plunger in engagement with said piston means, the
 arrangement being such that with said container located on said support
 15 means, the individual portion of frozen dessert may be dispensed through
 said nozzle means by actuating said drive means to force the piston and
 plunger along the tube.



The dispensing system allows individual portions of ice-cream to be dispensed easily and attractively into either a cornet or a bowl. This system provides a choice of flavours, quantity control of portion size, improved hygiene, and the ice-cream is dispensed quickly and efficiently.

Advantageously the individual portion of ice-cream lies in the range 100ml - 250ml, and preferably in the range 125ml - 200ml.

Advantageously the container is sealed with a removable cover.

The removable cover seals the container until it is required thereby reducing the chance of contamination.

Advantageously the container is rigid, and does not deform or collapse during the dispensing process. Preferably the container is made of high density polyethylene.

Advantageously the drive means for said dispensing means includes an arm attached to a pivot pin to engage said plunger, the arrangement being such that when said pivot pin rotates, said arm engages with and drives said plunger. Preferably said arm engages a wheel mounted on said plunger. Advantageously the drive means includes an operating handle mounted on said pivot pin.

Advantageously the diameter of the plunger is slightly less than the internal diameter of the cylindrical tube of the container.

According to a further embodiment of the present invention there is provided a method of dispensing frozen dessert from a container containing an individual portion of frozen dessert using a dispensing device, said container including a substantially cylindrical tube having first and second ends, a nozzle means towards said first end, a piston means located between said nozzle means and said second end, said piston means being adapted for sliding movement along the tube, said individual portion of frozen dessert being contained



within the cylindrical tube between said nozzle means and said piston means, said dispensing device including a plunger means mounted for reciprocating movement along a longitudinal axis, a drive means for driving said plunger along said axis, a support means for supporting said container with said plunger in engagement with said piston means, the method
 5 including placing the container of frozen dessert on said support means, operating said drive means to actuate said plunger, which engages with said piston driving it along the tube, and dispensing the frozen dessert through said nozzle into a serving container. The serving container may for example
 10 be a cornet or a glass bowl.

According to a further embodiment of the present invention there is provided a container for use in a dispensing system for frozen desserts, said container containing an individual portion of frozen dessert, said container including a substantially cylindrical tube having first and second ends, a
 15 nozzle means towards said first end, a piston means located between said nozzle means and said second end, said piston means being adapted for sliding movement along the tube, said individual portion of frozen dessert being contained within the cylindrical tube between said nozzle means and said piston means.

According to a further embodiment of the present invention there is provided a dispensing means for a dispensing system for frozen desserts, said dispensing means including a plunger means mounted for reciprocating movement along a longitudinal axis, a drive means for driving said plunger along said axis, and a support means for supporting a container containing
 20 frozen dessert in engagement with said plunger means.

Embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings of which:

Figure 1 is a perspective side view of a container;

Figure 2 is an end view of the container from the first end;

Figure 3 is an end view of the container from the second end;

Figure 4 is a side view, in cross-section, of the container on line IV-IV in Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a perspective side view of the container with a cover seal;



Figure 6 is a side view, in cross-section, of a dispenser;

Figure 7 is a front view, in cross-section, of the dispenser;

Figure 8 is a top view of the dispenser, showing hidden details;

Figure 9 is a perspective side view of the dispenser;

5 Figure 10 is a side view of the arm;

Figure 11 is a top view of the support base;

Figure 12 is a side view, in cross-section, of a second form of the dispenser, with the container in position.

10 Figure 13 is a front view, in cross-section, of a second form of the dispenser, with the container in position.

As shown in figures 1 and 4, the ice-cream container consists of a cylindrical tube 1 with first 2 and second ends 3.

15 A conical nozzle 4 partially closes the first end 2 of the cylindrical tube 1. The tube extends beyond the nozzle and has an end face 5 for engaging a support. The wall of the end part 6 that extends beyond the nozzle 4 is slightly thicker than the wall of the rest of the tube, increasing the strength of the end part 6. The nozzle 4, which is shown in more detail in figure 2, includes a star-shaped aperture 7. This produces an attractive decorative pattern on the surface of the ice-cream as it is extruded through the nozzle 4, and allows the extruded ice-cream to flex so that it may be served easily in either dishes or cornets.

20 As shown in figure 4, a piston 8 is located within the main body of the tube 1, between the nozzle 4 and the second end 3. The piston is hollow having a cylindrical wall 10, a circular first face 12 with a convex conical section 14 in the centre, and an annular second face 16. Figure 3 shows an end view of these features.

Alternative forms of the piston are possible, for example, as shown in Figures 6, and 7.

25 The first face may be substantially conical in shape. Instead of having an annular second face, the piston may include a ring 17 on the rear surface of the front face.

Furthermore, to clean the tube thoroughly a lip may be provided on the circumferential surface of the piston (not shown).

The conical nozzle and cylindrical tube are moulded as one part from a plastics material, for example high density polyethylene. The piston is then placed in position within the tube such that the space between the piston and nozzle is the predetermined volume of a single portion of ice-cream, for example 125ml. The container is filled with the ice-cream through the nozzle and then frozen. The ice-cream is of the normal "soft scoop" type. Once filled, the first end 2 of the container is sealed, as shown in figure 5, with a removable foil cover 18 that adheres to the end face 5 of the tube, protecting the ice-cream from contamination.

The ice-cream is expelled from the container through the nozzle 4 by driving the piston 8 along the cylindrical tube towards the nozzle 4. The shape of the piston ensures that substantially all the ice-cream within the container is expelled. The container is rigid and does not collapse during the expulsion of the ice-cream. The thicker end part 6 reinforces the container to resist collapse due to the downward pressure applied to expel the ice-cream. Because the tube is cylindrical, the force required to drive the piston is substantially uniform.

As shown in figures 6 to 9, the dispenser 20 includes a housing consisting of an upper portion 21 and a lower portion 22. The upper portion 21 includes two vertical flat sides 23 with a curved front plate 24 and top and bottom plates 25, 26. Two bearings 27, 28 are located within the upper portion 21, one in the top plate 25 and one in the bottom plate 26. Mounted within the upper portion 21 there is a pivot pin 30, which is free to rotate about its axis. A handle 32 is attached to the end of the pivot pin 30, which extends outwards through one side of the housing. Also attached to the pivot pin within the housing at an acute angle to the handle is an arm 34. Both the handle 32 and the arm 34 are perpendicular to the axis of the pivot pin 30.

The arm 34, also shown in figure 10, consists of a plate with a lower edge 35 and a top edge 36. The top edge 36 includes a stop member 37, which is horizontal when the handle 32 is in the upper position and engages with the top plate 25.

A cylindrical plunger 38 is mounted vertically within the housing for reciprocating movement along its longitudinal axis. The diameter of the plunger is slightly less than the internal diameter of the container 1, and the base of the plunger is substantially conical in shape. The bearings 27, 28 allow the plunger to move through the housing. At the top of the plunger there is a stop mechanism 40. A spring return mechanism 42 is provided, which biases the plunger vertically upwards. The spring return mechanism 42 is situated between the stop mechanism 40 and the top bearing 27. Extending through the central part of the plunger is a slot 44. A wheel 46 is mounted within the slot 44, on which the lower edge 35 of the arm 34 rests.

- 10 The lower portion 22 of the housing is narrower from front to back than the upper portion. Attached to the base of the lower portion 22 is a horizontal support plate 48. The support plate 48, also shown in figure 11, includes an open circular aperture 49 at the front end which is co-axial with the axis of the plunger 38. Around the edge of the aperture there is a C-shaped support surface 50 for engaging the end face 5 of the container such that the container is supported in an upright position with the axis of the container in line with the axis of the plunger 38.

A cap 52 is attached to the top of the upper portion 21 of the housing to hide the drive mechanism.

The dispenser 20 may either be wall mounted or mounted on a stand 54.

- 20 In the rest position, the handle 32 of the dispenser is in a vertical position. The operator pulls the handle 32 forwards, rotating the pivot pin 30. The arm 34 in turn engages the wheel 46 causing the plunger 38 to move downwards. Once the handle 32 is released, the spring return mechanism 42 drives the plunger 38 upwards to its original position within the housing.

- 25 The method of dispensing will now be described.

A customer chooses the desired flavour of ice-cream from the variety of flavours on offer. The operator removes a container of the selected flavour from the refrigerator. The protective foil cover is removed and the container placed vertically in position on the support base of the dispenser. A wafer cornet or bowl is held below the container. The

handle of the dispenser is pulled forwards, towards the operator, driving the plunger down towards the container. The plunger engages the piston, forcing the ice-cream out of the nozzle. Expulsion of the ice-cream can be carefully controlled by the operation of the handle, enabling the operator to obtain the desired presentation. Once the individual
 5 portion of ice-cream has been expelled from the container, the plunger can be returned to its original position by releasing the handle. The ice-cream is then given to the customer, and the container removed and disposed of, or may be cleaned and refilled.

As will be apparent, the dispenser is very simple and easy to maintain and use. The dispenser is easy to operate manually since only a relatively small amount of force, about
 10 8-9psi, is required to dispense the ice-cream from a container. The container is a tube, resulting in efficient packing of the containers within a freezer. Due to the shape of the container it is also obvious to customers that the ice-cream needs to be dispensed before they can eat it. The aperture of the nozzle is large enough to enable ice-cream containing particulates to be dispensed just as easily as smooth ice-cream. Thus this dispensing
 15 system enables different types and flavours of ice-cream to be served attractively quickly and easily. The design of the dispensing system is such that it is not necessary to dismantle any part of the dispenser in order to insert the container. The container is simply inserted perpendicularly to the axis of the plunger, and placed on the support base of the dispenser. The plunger is then brought into engagement with the piston of the container. After
 20 dispensing the ice-cream, the container is just as easily removed and disposed of appropriately. The system also reduces the possible hygiene problems associated with the scoop method of supplying ice-cream since the ice-cream sold is sealed until required, and the dispenser does not come into contact with the ice-cream.

Various modifications of the dispensing system are envisaged, for example a pulley
 25 mechanism could be used in the dispenser instead of a cam mechanism, as shown in figures 12 and 13. Within the housing, a quadrant 56 is attached to the pivot pin 30. A cord 58 is attached to the top of the plunger 38 and to the base of the quadrant 56. There is a groove in the circumferential edge of the quadrant 56, in which the cord rests. When the handle 32 is pulled the quadrant 56 rotates downward pulling the cord 58 which in turn
 30 causes the plunger 38 to be driven downwards. The spring return mechanism 42, which then biases the plunger vertically upwards, is positioned between a stop member 59 on

the plunger 38 and the lower bearing 28. Instead of being conical, the base of the plunger 38 may also be flat.

Furthermore, instead of making the whole container out of plastic, the tube may be of waxed cardboard with a plastic nozzle and piston.



THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

1. A dispensing system for frozen desserts, said dispensing system including a plurality of containers and a dispensing device, each container containing an individual portion of frozen dessert, said container including a substantially cylindrical tube having first and second ends, a nozzle means toward said first end, a piston means located between said nozzle means and said second end, said piston means being adapted for sliding movement along the tube, said individual portion of frozen dessert being contained within the cylindrical tube between said nozzle means and said piston means, said dispensing device including a plunger means mounted for reciprocating movement, a drive means for driving said plunger, a support means for supporting said first end of said container with said plunger in engagement with said piston means, the arrangement being such that with said container located on said support means, the individual portion of frozen dessert may be dispensed through said nozzle means by actuating said drive means to force the piston and plunger along the tube.
2. A dispensing system according to claim 1, wherein said individual portion lies in the range 100ml - 250ml.
3. A dispensing system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said container is rigid.

Dated this second day of February 1999

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F B RICE & CO



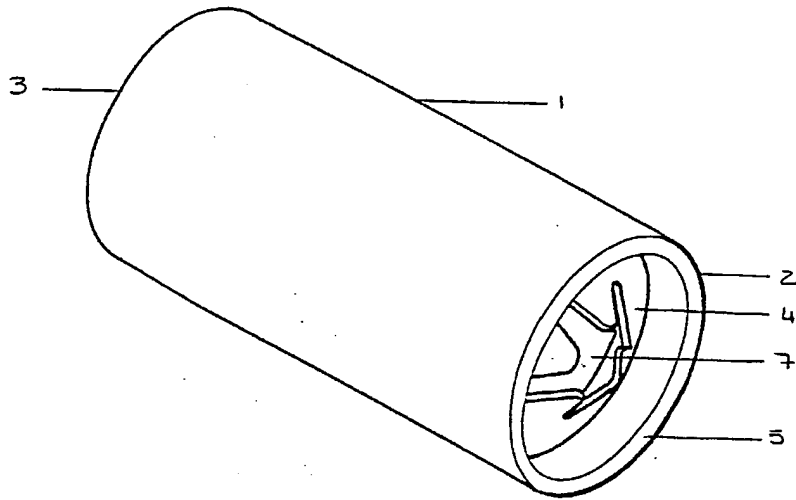


Figure 1

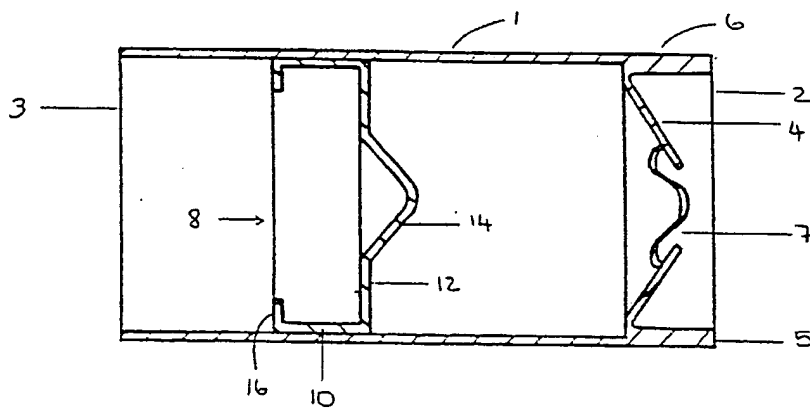


Figure 4

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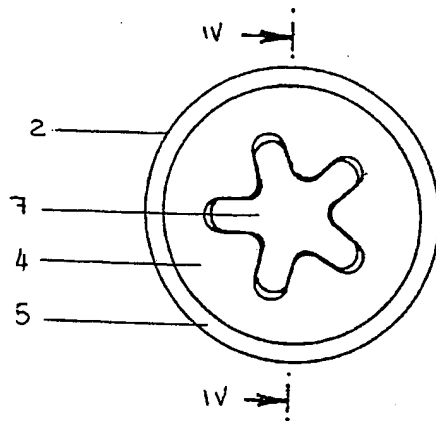


Figure 2

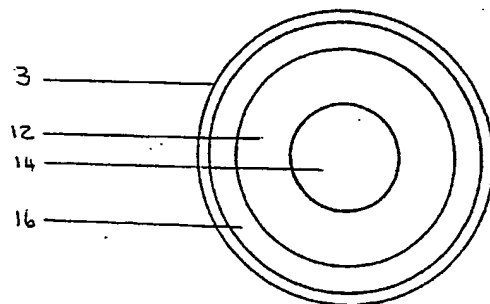
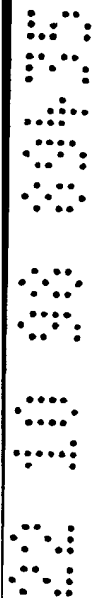


Figure 3



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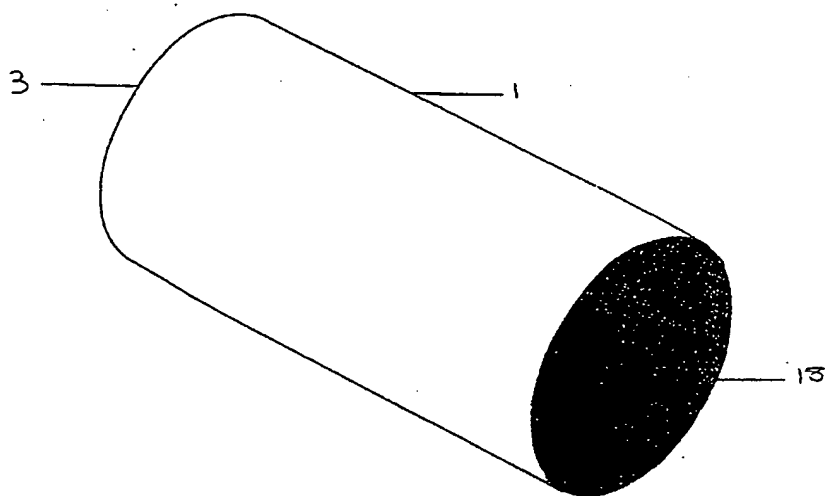


Figure 5

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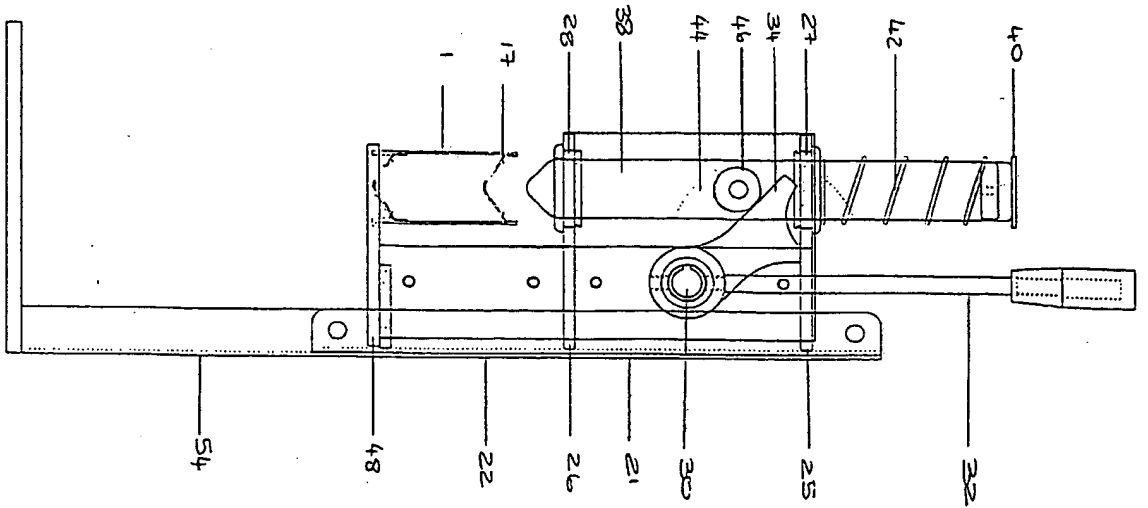


Figure 6

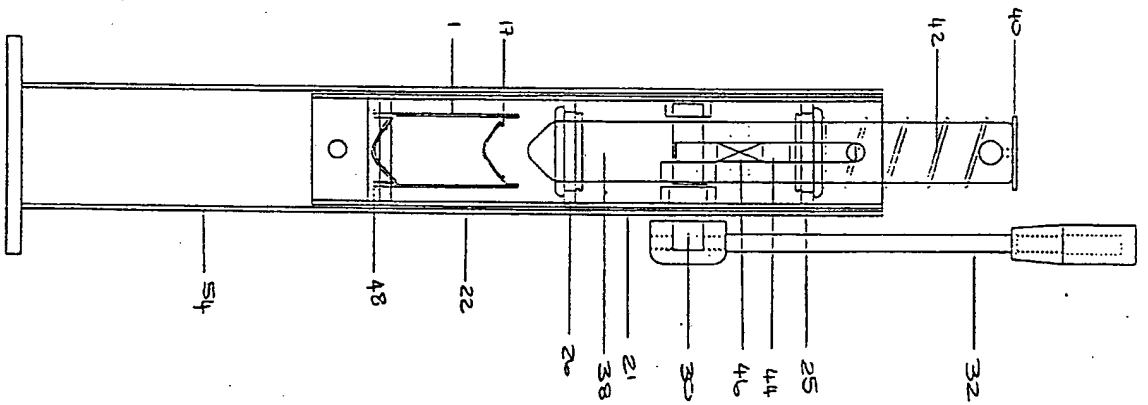


Figure 7

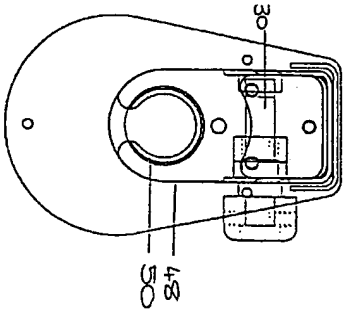


Figure 8

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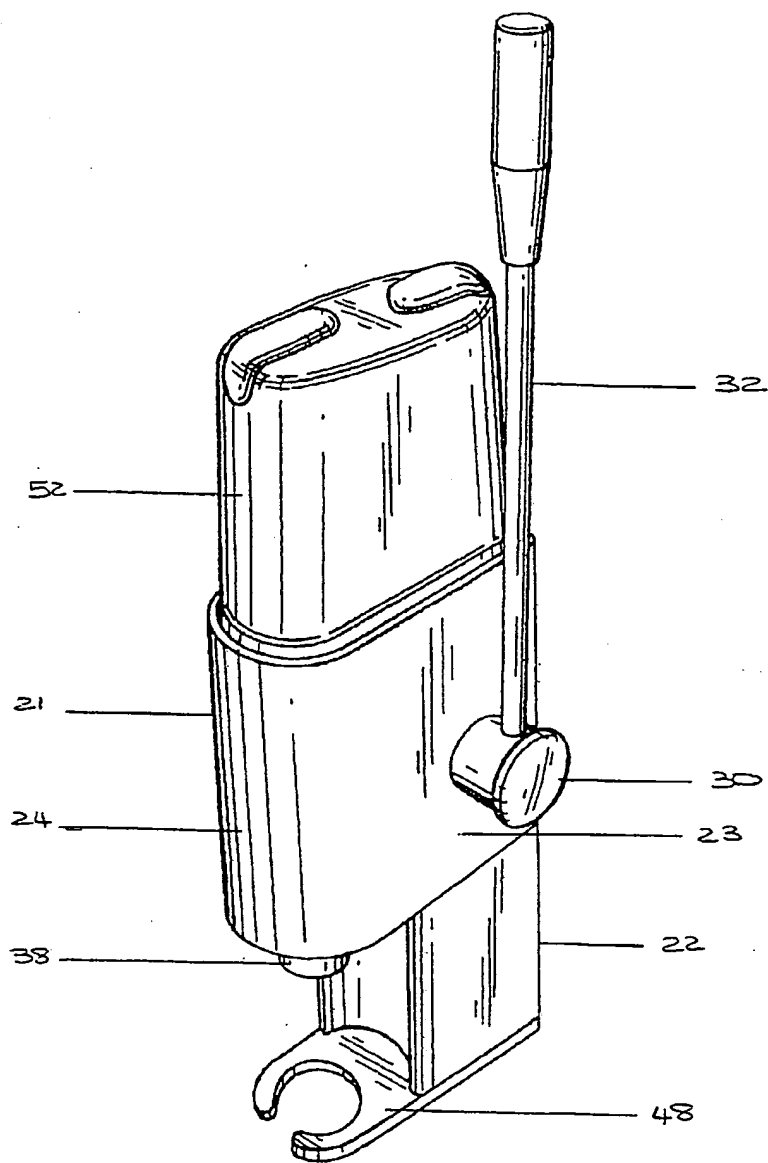
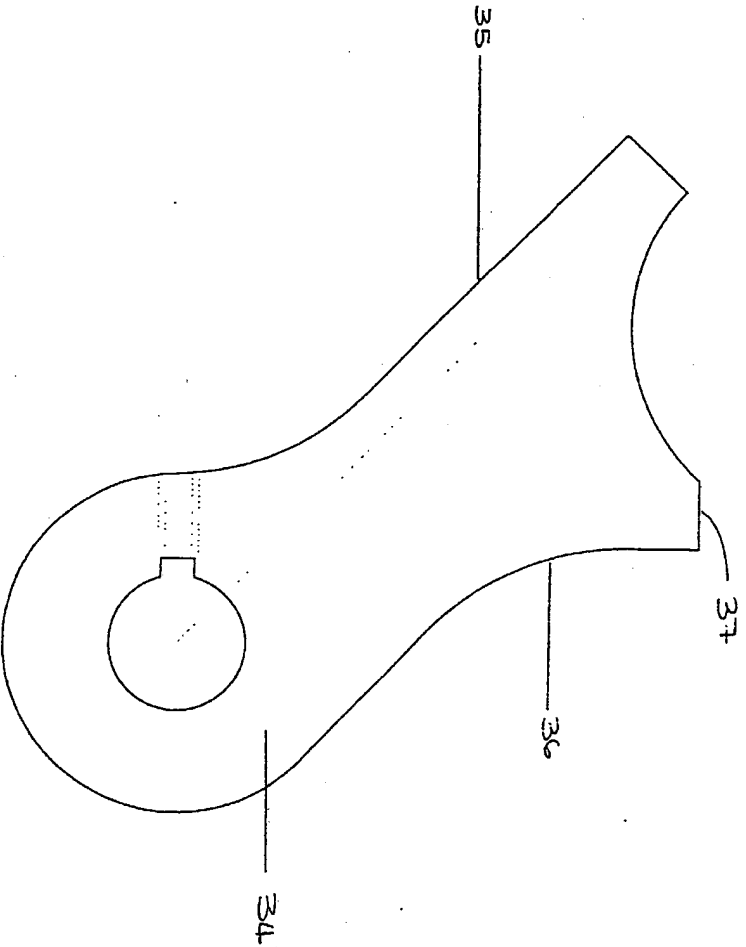


Figure 9

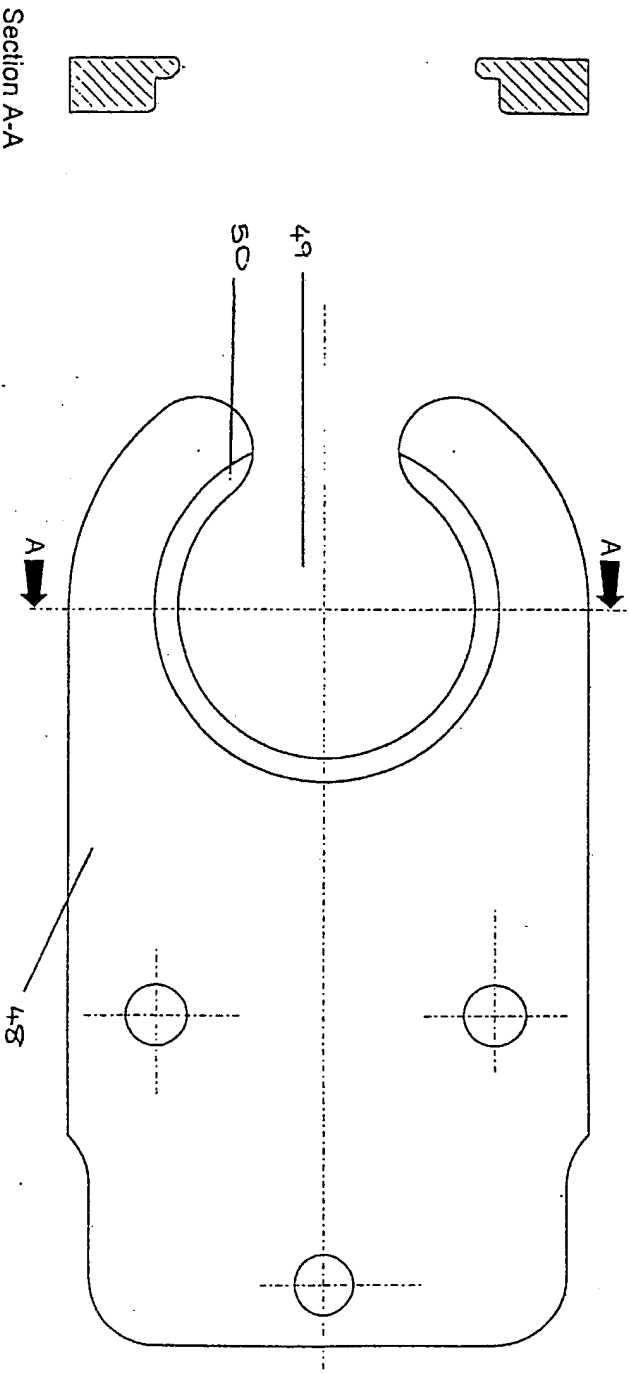
Figure 10



6/8

This Drawing Complies With BS 308		Unspecified Surface Finish Machined to		Material		Drawn		TITLE	
Break All Sharp Edges 0.25 x 45 Deg Unless Otherwise Stated		Unspecified Tolerances Machined to		Protective Finish		Date		Cam	
THIRD ANGLE PROJECTION						Approved		Dwg No	
ALL DIMS IN MILLIMETRES						Date		EZ 3013	
								SCALE	
								SHEET OF	

Figure 11



This Drawing Complies With BS 308		Unspecified Surface Finish Machined to		Material		Drawn		TITLE	
Brass All Sharp Edges 0.25 x 45 Deg Unless Otherwise Stated		Unspecified Tolerances Machined to		Protective Finish		Date		Cup Plate	
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